A PEEP AT A BALLET RUSSE REHEARSAL

Life As a Dancer Closely Resembles the Hardest Kind of Work—Trainer and Director Have Their Troubles, Too.

"The rattling old piano gave forth a crash and the ballet came to order. The artists on the side lines whipped out their sketch books, the reporters put on their tortoise-shells and the business of the day began."

By Sarah Addington.
Drawings by Clara Tice.

THE Ballet Russe, leaping down on one toe into New York Harbor, whirled a moment, bowed, then, kissing a hand to reporters and photographers, ran straight up to the Century Theatre and through a door marked "No Admittance."

"For, oh, mademoiselle" (our Russian is a bit infirm, so we give the English) "only four little days, and so much rehearsing!"

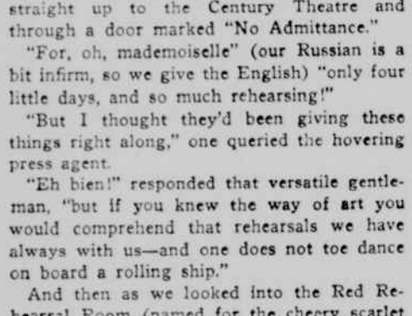
"But I thought they'd been giving these things right along," one queried the hovering press agent.

"Eh bien!" responded that versatile gentleman, "but if you knew the way of art you would comprehend that rehearsals we have always with us—and one does not toe dance on board a rolling ship."

And then as we looked into the Red Rehearsal Room (named for the cheery scarlet axe therein, walls and floors being drab) and the other rooms bearing just as appropriate appellations, we had a glimpse of the life of a ballet dancer. And that life is very simple: She just dances—about nine hours of the twenty-four.

First there was Mlle. Zenia Maclezova, the première, working away in dingy tarlatan ballet skirt before a long mirror in the biggest, barest room of them all. She smiled and greeted us, and then, after twinkling around a moment on impatient toes, excused herself, and, springing suddenly high in the air, alighted with mincing steps, flung her arms back, leaned far to one side, and, holding the pose, frowned fiercely at her figure in the looking glass.

She began it over and did it again and again. A strand of hair blew loose and played on her forehead; she stuck it under her tight ribbon band relentlessly.. No time for trappings, no thought of glory. If you have thought of a dancer's life as being one of sweetness and light and afternoon teas, remember the gray little figure in the huge barren room at the Century—the gray little figure who becomes so brilliant a Fire Bird, so confident a Princess.



"Every time M. de Diaghileff moved things happened."

TUNELESS MUSIC.

Across the hall a lesson was going on, Mme. Tchernichova in royal blue skirts going through her steps to the tap of a cane and a tuneless whistle, both executed by the wrinkled old ballet master, M. Cecchetti, who has seen them all through their years of practice—Pavlowa, Lopokowa and the rest. He sits there quietly, little narrow collar and red tie on the chair beside him, bandana handkerchief crumpled in his left hand, his right hand tapping the cane. He sits there whistling softly no tune at all, his keen little eyes watching every move of the dancer. Such an old little man, seventy-two, you know, the age when some old men are mumbling in the chimney corner. But he is not the mumbling kind, with all his wrinkles curving up, with his quick Italian eyes, his master's knowledge of what those pink feet ought to be doing, how those arms should be posed. And, too, when you see his authoritative grand manner as the Immortal in the Fire Bird you would surely think he was a man in his halest forties, strong and rejoicing to run his race.

"Oh, Cecchetti is as young as the youngest of us," says the ballet proudly, while he smiles at them with his sweet old man's smile and bows in low courtesy to the newcomer.

There was a rush past the door of many figures, the chorus on its way to a rehearsal in queer little practice costumes of every color.

Following them to the Red Rehearsal Room you might think the rehearsal was on, by the flying and swooping and stooping and pirouetting that was being done; but no, that was merely the limbering up. The real work would come later. They coached each other, tried steps in groups, ran and skipped and swayed and tiptoed all over the room, chattering French and Russian.

THE TORTOISE SHELLS IN ACTION.

M. Gregorief, tall and lean, finally took the centre, the rattly old piano gave forth a crash and the ballet came to order. The artists on the side lines whipped out their sketch books, the reporters put on their tortoise shells and the business of the day began. Around the room they danced and danced, trying the same thing over and over.

"It really isn't so interesting, you know," said one writer person to another. "Well, do you suppose you are interesting at your typewriter?" was the answer.

M. Gregorief provided a little color, however. He shouted and gesticulated, sang and beat his hands together, climbed on top of his chair, rode astride it strenuously, threw it around the room, grunted and snarled and snorted, and once when this wonderful, almost perfect, group of girl dancers made some slight mistake emitted such a wild, strange animal noise that the sideliners looked at each other in horror and shivered. Yet the dancers' white brows were untroubled and their countenances serene.

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Flora Revelles, one of the principals.

In came some of the chorus men to look on, one with high-heeled American buttoned shoes of the year 1910, an attempt to compliment our prevailing fashion, at least. The girls danced on and on.

"They must be dead," commented the writer person to her friend.

"They look by all means alive," came the answer.

We left them still dancing, nobody could stay as long as they were going to be there, apparently, for there was going to be a rehearsal of the "supers" downstairs on the stage; one must see that.

The rehearsal of the supers was of just as serious intent as were the others, but the danger line of comedy was often approached. There they stood on the huge stage, a stolid crowd of them, the men in derbies, the ladies with their muffs tucked securely in front of them, just come in to sing for the Russian ballet at 50 cents a night, and entirely unmoved by the glories of Russian music. They had come from everywhere, and they looked it.

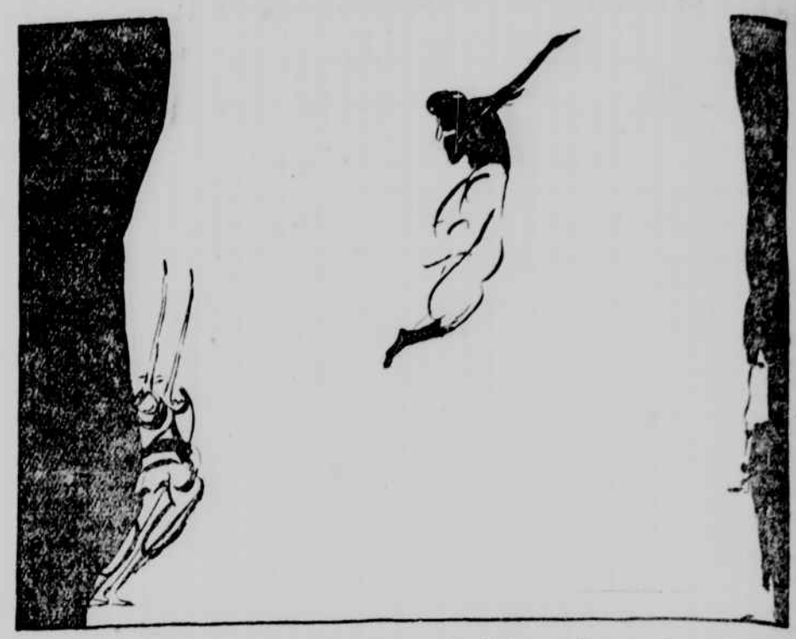
"All the walks of life represented there," announced the press agent briskly from behind his bottle of fermillac (he doesn't have time to eat, poor thing!) "Most of them moving picture actors out of jobs."

There was a rustle in the audience, Serge de Diaghileff had arrived, and it was nearly time for the principals. The orchestra began the overture of the Fire Bird. There was another rustle. Pavlowa had come in. Two or three people rushed up to her; they all kicsed. Another rustle.

"Daniel Mayer, the greatest impressario in the world, my dear, a true European artist discoverer," whispered some one.

Maclezova was in the midst of her opening dance when a great hammering from above made the big theatre ring.

"Yxzchosky! Milkinowitch! Herovina, mulohxzogh!" exclaimed M. de Diaghileff, savagely, glaring up to the balcony at blank darkness. Somebody went up to investigate and fished out an innocent-faced workman. He was brought downstairs before the tribunal and at his arraignment his harmlessness changed to animosity.



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"Stop that noise, do you hear?" he was charged. "No noise when we're rehearsing. Haven't you ever been in a theatre before?"

"I have that," he said mutinously. "But, say, I ask you, you tell me to finish me work by noon to-morrow and to-night you tell me to stop. Which is it?"

They sent him back unanswered and he strode up the aisle muttering.

"I suppose they want velvet tools," he jeered to himself, "or perhaps they want me to string them wires together with baby ribbon!"

M. Diaghileff sat staring moodily at a blank curtain once when nothing was happening. Then suddenly he sprang up and something immediately did happen: the dance began. Every time he moved things happened, too. And he moved most of the time, from his seat up to the stage, instructing the orchestra leader, ordering the stage manager, shouting to the ballet master.

"There was another rustle. Pavlowa had come in."

"He's a wonderful critic," said the writer person, "and there's no excuse that's good enough for him to consider. His 'niche vow' (it doesn't matter) applies to every difficulty. It doesn't matter how hard anything is, it has to be done."

An electric light tumbled down affectionately on Massin's head when he was dancing, he didn't flinch. The theatre got so cold that even the dancers had to wear their sweaters; nobody noticed it.

Mme. Tchernichova.

It was late and they were tired and there was another rehearsal scheduled for the next morning. Yet they danced and danced, patient and untiring, even spirited. The supers in their incongruous costumes stood around shivering. Pavlowa watched on, her lean, mobile face intent, her head moving slightly to the music. The directors worked on, teaching, showing. The workman upstairs hammered, but oh! so softly. It grew very late.

"I'm dead tired," said the writer person, "and my dear, every time I look at those supers I want to howl. But really, I'm quite awed, and I can't think of my own fatigue or even of laughing with all this serious business going on. Isn't it a wonderful spirit?"

It was. And when one sees the ballet in all its glory during a performance he may say "Gee, what practice it must have taken," and so on and so forth, but when he sees the rehearsals in all their intensity he says: "It's sure to be a wonderful thing; people can't work this way to no effect."

Americanize the Hyphenate by Hospitality

Give Him a Real Welcome by Insuring Him Against Exploitation and Struggles for Which He Is Unprepared.

He Generally Reflects Our Attitude Toward Him, Says Frederic C. Howe—Education and Sympathy Necessary.

By FREDERIC C. HOWE.
United States Commissioner of Immigration.

WE CANNOT altogether blame the hyphenates who express lukewarmness toward the United States. We are ready with criticism, but we do not always realize that the attitude of foreigners toward America is partially a reflection of our attitude, as Americans, toward them. We are, to a considerable extent, responsible for the progress or lack of progress made by immigrants toward good citizenship.

The basis of our immigration policy is this: About 98 per cent of those who come are admitted, 2 per cent are rejected. In other words, we welcome all but 2 per cent, rejecting only such as are physically or mentally unfit. We do not admit undesirables, because they would tend to weaken the American stock.

I interpreted our laws, when I took up my work out here on Ellis Island, as being both positive and negative, embodying the percentage just mentioned. Heretofore the emphasis had been directed toward keeping out the undesirables. Nothing was done for the vast majority admitted to this country. Our welcome, in fact, was but of flashing duration. We said, "You may come in." Then we turned our backs on them.

After foreigners had passed inspection they were passed into the country without further ceremony. The government washed its hands of them. Instead of systematically going about it to help the newcomers find a place and gain a foothold in America, the government simply bade them fare as they could.

This seemed to me a sadly mistaken policy, and I determined that Ellis Island, the greatest gateway the world has ever known, and through which, in normal times, a million people enter the country annually, should be an agency of service. I wanted the first impression of the immigrant to be such as to justify dreams that democracy is something other than absolutism and oppression. It was my ambition to make these dreams come true, in so far as my influence and the influence of my office could extend.

But, after all, though Ellis Island might be made attractive, and though laws of courtesy and kindness might go into rigid effect out here, all this could have merely the effect of a short welcome. When the immigrant passed off the tiny island and entered New York, what then? His lot was hardly a happy one.

He was exploited and otherwise imposed upon at every step. His troubles began at once, and dogged his travels across the length and breadth of this country.

We began by cleaning-up conditions on outgoing trains, which carry 70 per cent of the admitted immigrants west to Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, etc. We inspected the trains, insisted upon ample accommodations, got rid of wooden cars and insured the safety of passengers from the beginning of their journey to its end.

We inspected immigrant hotels and lodging houses in New York. Some of them we put out of business for extortion and other abuses. Nearly 80 per cent of the population of New York are either foreign-born or children of foreign parents. We opened up two stations in New York, one at Barge House and one at 240 East Seventy-ninth Street. These we designated as clearing houses for all immigrant complaints. Inspectors were placed in charge of them, instructed to look after every sort of complaint, to direct night schools and to advise about citizenship and naturalization. These inspectors were asked to consider as one of their duties the assistance of immigrants when in difficulties with the police. The police and school departments readily coöperated with these agencies, whose primary object was to protect all aliens against imposition, fraud and loss.

But all this work has been of an informal and unofficial nature. In my opinion, we ought to have a definite Federal immigration policy which should look after the immigrant until he is actually identified with this country in every possible way. As a first step in this direction, we are supplying boards of education all over the United States with the names of arriving children, so that they may be put in school without loss of time. We send out weekly reports, which each city follows. Thus we get hold of the younger generation of foreigners, getting it started on the road of good citizenship. If this younger generation be thoroughly assimilated there will not be much fear from the older generation.

Still, of course, in the latter we have a big problem. In the first place, employers generally look upon the mature immigrant as just so much human raw material for mines and mills. They exploit him so long as his working powers make him of value. When he is old they cast him off, leaving him to be supported at the expense of the community. Employers are always strong for free immigration because this keeps up a steady stream of cheap labor, which does not become identified with organized labor. There is a constant conflict between immigrant and organized labor. This is not surprising, since, from the point of view of the labor unions, immigration interferes with the existing standard of living, while, from the point of view of the employer, it insures a quantity of common labor at a low wage.

Secretary of Labor Wilson is working out a big plan whereby the alien, through a division of information organized at Washington, will be put in touch with profitable jobs. Last year, through immigrant agencies, nearly 40,000 jobs were found for newcomers. The system is being gradually developed, and will eventually include the whole country. It began by an effort of the Department of Labor to place men on farms, and while its scope has broadened very materially, the rural field is still being vigorously worked.

It has also been proposed that the $9,000,000 which has accumulated from immigrant head taxes be appropriated by Congress and used for the purpose of establishing agricultural colonies. Small farms, of perhaps five to twenty acres, it is proposed may be sold on instalment, so that the $9,000,000 will remain a rotating fund, to be used over and over again.

Such a course, however, would require action by Congress. It would also involve a close coöperation with railroads and systems of coöperative marketing, making it possible for the new farmer to get on his feet as quickly as possible. This is an official beginning of the first real attempt which has been made to distribute aliens where their service is most needed.

There is room for millions of hard-working, industrial people in the United States. The immigrants have only to be induced to become farmers, instead of herding in the overcrowded cities. If we could break up land speculation and open the soil to those actually wanting to cultivate it, millions could be amply supported.

Surely not more than one-fifth of the land in the United States is properly cultivated. There are about 200,000,000 acres held in estates averaging in size a thousand acres. These estates are held for speculation, and are increasing in value very rapidly. We cannot successfully work out a distribution programme until we do away with idle landholding, until we make land cheap and accessible to those who really want to make use of it.

The best means of checking this evil has been adopted in Western Canada, where land is so heavily taxed that the owner of a big tract will either use his land or will sell it. As this plan has proven a success in Canada, so also is it the plan adopted by Lloyd George for India. Land must be used, and not held, if we are going to get anywhere at all in making life equal.

But the problem is bigger even than labor's problem. The problem involves politics, literacy, health as well. Probably three-quarters of the immigrants who have come to America during the last twenty years have settled east of the Mississippi and north of the Ohio.

They settle largely in the big cities. In Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Boston and Pittsburgh about 75 per cent of the total population is either foreign-born or immediately descended from the foreign-born. Not more than half of the males of voting age are naturalized. A large percentage of the immigrants never even learn our language. They are undigested, unassimilated. In short, they are hyphenates.

The problem is one of assimilation. There are 13,000,000 people in the United States who were born in other countries, and about 18,000,000 children immediately descended from the foreign-born. This totals 31,000,000, representing the foreign-born and their children. Our problem is to assimilate these. Are we doing our duty by them? Are we doing all we can to eliminate the hyphen to which many of them cling? The problem is too definite to invite any doubt of its reality. Because of it we need a constructive Federal immigration policy.

Several cities have grasped the significance of this great problem, and have taken steps to cope with it. Cleveland, for example, has established a very efficient immigration bureau through which all cases of imposition are investigated. Detroit and Los Angeles have also figured conspicuously in this regard. Their bureaus have proved highly successful, particularly in the educational department. Detroit doubled the number of student night classes this year. Those teachers are engaged who seem best able to catch and hold the attention of adult aliens.

No provision is made by law for any particular training to be undergone by the immigrant before he is allowed to take out his citizenship papers. Procedure is careless, indifferent and unorganized. The alien takes out his first and second papers as best he may, frequently falling a financial or political victim to unscrupulous exploiters.

In New York we are endeavoring to work out night classes in connection with the public school system. In these classes the immigrant is to learn a great deal about the United States before he comes up in court for admission to citizenship. In many Western cities such classes have been held, very successfully. Los Angeles judges insist that aliens present a diploma or certificate from a school authority certifying that they have pursued certain courses of study a specified number of weeks. Other cities are copying this excellent plan, which both awakens a sense of pride in the

Continued on page six.

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